

EPA ONSITE PRESENCE CHARLESTON, WV

QUESTION: What is the current status of EPA onsite presence at the ongoing remediation at Freedom Industries.

ANSWER:

- The site has been stable for more than two weeks. WVDEP staff and management have been diligent in overseeing the activities on-site and approving the facility's plans for the continued remediation of this site in accordance with all of WVDEP's orders. The current operations at the site are standard remediation activities consisting of pumping and controlling of water, along with maintenance of boom in the river, following plans prepared by the company that have been reviewed by the State and EPA. The facility has worked with WVDEP to complete the ordered tasks as expeditiously as possible.
- EPA is discontinuing a daily on-site presence at the Freedom Industries facility. West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection (WVDEP) water and waste enforcement staff now are at the Freedom facility overseeing operations from 8am to 8pm daily. If conditions change, or if WVDEP needs federal on-site assistance, two Region III On Scene Coordinators (OSCs) who live in West Virginia would be able respond in a matter of hours. EPA OSCs are also available by phone and email to provide any guidance that WVDEP may request. EPA's contractors can be redeployed as necessary. EPA will return to the site during future tank dismantling to observe site conditions. WVDEP has scheduled a weekly operations meeting at the site. EPA OSCs will either participate by phone or in person as needed in these meetings.

BACKGROUND

Background:

On January 9, EPA received notice of a chemical spill from Freedom Industries in Charleston, WV into the Elk River. The spilled chemical was MCHM, which is used in coal preparation and processing. The governor of WV declared a state of emergency for nine counties. The Kanawha Valley Water Treatment Plant detected the MCHM and, while the substance is not classified as a toxic or otherwise regulated substance, issued an order to not drink, cook, or bathe in the water to approximately 100,000 West Virginia American Water Company (WVAWC) customers or 300,000 people in a nine county area.

On January 10, WVDEP ordered the facility to cease operations, cleanup the MCHM, and empty all storage tanks. WVDEP also issued notices of violation from their Air and Water Permitting programs. On January 21, Freedom Industries informed WVDEP, WVAWC, and EPA that another chemical, polyglycol ether (PPH) was also a constituent of the release. EPA shared this information with the Chemical Safety Board (CSB) and the Agency for Toxic Substances and

Disease Registry (ATSDR). CSB and the FBI continue to investigate the Site. US District Attorney Booth Goodwin has also launched an investigation.

The facility has hired a contractor to develop a long term remediation plan to find and remove any residual contamination. The facility reports that all salable materials are now off-site. The tanks are empty and ready to be cleaned.

Water sampling continues at the West Virginia American plant; reported concentrations of MCHM in raw (intake) and treated water continue to be below the detectable limit (10 ppb).

The residential sampling study commissioned by Governor Tomblin has posted information about the overall study plan and an initial sampling effort including 10 homes. The ambitious pilot effort included collecting 900 samples from hot and cold taps and various outlets in each home, and interviews regarding residential water use, compliance with flushing instructions, and experiences with water quality. Other segments of the study include an independent toxicological evaluation of the 1 ppm protective level for MCHM, and an investigation of the odor threshold for MCHM.